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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 BIB-01 /084 W
----------009676 161813Z /50
O R 161744Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8736
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY LISBON
USNMR SHAPE
USMISSION USNATO
USCINCEUR
DIA WASHDC
USMISSION USUN
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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SUBJ: ELECTIONS 1978: PROSPECTS FOR THE SECOND ROUND

SUMMARY: ALL OBSERVERS AGREE THAT ELECTORAL PREDICTIONS ARE HAZARDOUS, BUT IN FACT MOST ARE WILLING TO GIVE A DEFINITE EDGE TO THE MAJORITY FOR THE MARCH 19 SECOND ROUND. THE SOCIALISTS THEMSELVES SEEM TO THINK THAT THE LEFT WILL MOST PROBABLY WIN ABOUT 220 SEATS, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE ENOUGH CLOSE RACES TO SWING THAT RESULT SUBSTANTIALLY, EVEN ABOVE THE 246 SEATS NEEDED FOR A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. THIS TELEGRAM EXAMINES IN MORE DETAIL THE PROSPECTS FOR THE 410 SEATS STILL IN QUESTION. END SUMMARY.

1. WHAT REMAINS TO BE DECIDED: OF THE 491 ASSEMBLY SEATS AT STAKE, 81 HAVE ALREADY BEEN DECIDED AFTER THE FIRST ROUND, GIVING 71 DEPUTIES TO THE MAJORITY AND 10 TO THE LEFT:

--68 DEPUTIES WERE ELECTED OUTRIGHT WITH MORE THAN 50 PERCENT OF THE VOTE;

--IN EIGHT DISTRICTS, ONLY ONE CANDIDATE REMAINS FOR THE SECOND ROUND (OTHERS WHO MADE THE 12.5 PERCENT BARRIER HAVING NOW WITHDRAWN IN FAVOR OF THEIR BETTER-PLACED COALITION PARTNERS);

--FIVE DISTRICTS WILL SEE A MAJORITY VERSUS MAJORITY CONTEST, AS NO LEFT CANDIDATE GOT THE NECESSARY 12.5 PERCENT.

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2. OF THE REMAINING 410 RACES, 409 WILL HAVE ONLY TWO CANDIDATES, LEFT AND MAJORITY; THERE WILL BE ONLY ONE TRIANGULAR ELECTION (AS OPPOSED TO 67 IN 1973) IN FINISTERE WHERE BOTH THE RPR AND CDS WILL MAINTAIN THEIR REPRESENTATIVES AGAINST A SOCIALIST (THE RPR IS NONETHELESS ASSURED OF THE VICTORY). CANDIDATES INCLUDE:

:

LEFT	MAJORITY
PS 243	RPR 218
PCF 144	PR 94
MRG 20	CDS 47
OTHER 3	RADICALS 16
	CNIP 9
	OTHER 27
TOTAL 410	411 (DUE TO ONE 3-WAY RACE)

3. THE CRITICAL SEATS: THE 410 SEATS STILL IN QUESTION ARE CURRENTLY DIVIDED BETWEEN 243 MAJORITY AND 166 LEFT DEPUTIES (WITH THE REMAINING SEAT

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NEWLY CREATED FOR MAYOTTE). TO WIN, THE LEFT WOULD NEED TO RETAIN ALL OF ITS PRESENT SEATS, AND WIN ANOTHER 70 FROM THE MAJORITY. IN FACT, THE LEFT IS IN SOME DANGER OF LOSING BETWEEN 10-15 OF THESE 166 SEATS, MEANING THAT THE TOTAL GAIN FROM THE MAJORITY MUST TOTAL 80-85 FOR A BARE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY OF 246. WHAT ARE THE POSSIBILITIES FOR

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SUCH A RESULT?:

-- FIRST, THERE ARE 58 DISTRICTS NOW HELD BY THE MAJORITY IN WHICH THE LEFT TOTALED MORE THAN 50 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE ON THE FIRST ROUND. LEFT CANDIDATES FOR MARCH 19 INCLUDE 26 PS, 30 PCF, 1 MRG AND 1 DIVERSE. ASSUMING THAT ALL 28 CAN BE WON BY THE PS, MRG AND DIVERSE CANDIDATES (THANKS TO SUPERIOR PCF DISCIPLINE IN SUPPORTING OTHER LEFT CANDIDATES AND TO SOME CENTRIST VOTERS WILLING TO VOTE FOR THE NON-COMMUNIST LEFT), THERE ARE STILL SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR COMMUNIST CANDIDATES, WHO COULD BE EXPECTED TO WIN IN ONLY ABOUT 15-20 OF THEIR 30 DISTRICTS. THE LEFT THUS STANDS TO GAIN, OPTIMISTICALLY, ABOUT 48 OF THESE 58 DISTRICTS.

--THERE ARE ANOTHER 45 DISTRICTS NOW HELD BY THE MAJORITY IN WHICH NEITHER LEFT NOR MAJORITY WON 50 PERCENT ON THE FIRST ROUND AND WHERE MARGINAL PARTIES (ECOLOGISTS, JOBERTISTS, WOMEN AND REGIONAL MOVEMENTS, ETC.) HOLD WHAT COULD BE THE DECISIVE VOTES. THESE 45 INCLUDE 26 PS, 16 PCF AND 3 MRG CANDIDATES. SHORT OF A REAL MIRACLE, THE LEFT WILL DO WELL TO WIN HALF OF THESE RACES.

4. WHAT'S POSSIBLE: EXAMINING THE POSSIBLE RESULTS, ONE ARRIVES AT A LIKELY TOTAL FOR THE LEFT OF ROUGHLY 227 SEATS, WITH A MAXIMUM EXPECTATION OF 258 (IF ALL 45 MARGINAL CASES ARE WON BY THE LEFT). SOCIALIST PARTY EXPERTS PREDICT A LEFT TOTAL WITHIN THE SPREAD OF 220-
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257 SEATS (PS: 122-137; PCF: 90-109; MRG: 8-11), WITH MOST PS OBSERVERS EXPECTING A RESULT MUCH NEARER THE LOWER FIGURE. A CLOSE ASSISTANT TO PS NUMBER TWO PIERRE MAUROY TOLD EMBOFF MARCH 16 THAT THE LEFT COULD WIN 260 SEATS, "IF EVERY SINGLE LEFT VOTE IS TRANSFERRED ON THE SECOND ROUND." IN FACT, THE SOCIALISTS EXPECT AT

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BEST A 60-65 PERCENT TRANSFER OF PS SUPPORT TO THE PCF. OTHER INDEPENDENT OBSERVERS PREDICT A MAJORITY VICTORY OF 10-30 SEATS WHILE AURORE, OBVIOUSLY TRYING TO KEEP MAJORITY VOTERS MOTIVATED, FORECAST POSSIBLE RESULTS RANGING FROM:

-- A 269-222 LEFT VICTORY (ASSUMING 95 PERCENT PCF TO PS TRANSFER AND 90 PERCENT PS TO PCF);
-- TO A NEAR DEADLOCK OF 246 LEFT - 245 MAJORITY (WITH 90 PERCENT PCF TO PS TRANSFER AND 80 PERCENT PS TO PCF);
-- TO A 276-215 MAJORITY VICTORY BASED ON THE TRANSFER PREDICTED IN RECENT POLLS.

5. UNCERTAINTIES AS ALWAYS: AS THE AURORE TABULATIONS DEMONSTRATE, THERE IS STILL PLENTY OF ROOM FOR SPECULATION ON SECOND-ROUND RESULTS:

-- THE TRANSFER OF VOTES ISSUE REMAINS WIDE OPEN, WITH SOME ARGUING THAT THE LEFT WILL FARE BETTER THAN USUAL IN LIGHT OF AN APPARENTLY MORE HARD-CORE FIRST-ROUND VOTE AND OTHERS PREDICTING POOR PS TO PCF TRANSFER BECAUSE NUMEROUS SOCIALISTS BLAME THE COMMUNISTS' POLEMICAL CAMPAIGN FOR PS SHORTFALL ON MARCH 12;
-- THE MAJORITY ELECTORATE MAY BE SOMEWHAT DEMOBILIZED AFTER THE FIRST-ROUND SURPRISE, ALTHOUGH MAJORITY LEADERS ARE DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO AVOID SUCH DANGER;
-- SOME PS SYMPATHIZERS MAY COME BACK INTO THE FOLD NOW THAT THE LEFT APPEARS BEATEN;
-- MARGINAL PARTY SUPPORTERS ARE UNPREDICTABLE

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ON THE SECOND ROUND AND HOLD THE KEYS TO NUMEROUS CLOSE CONTESTS.

THESE ARE SOME OF THE MANY REASONS FOR WHICH MOST OBSERVERS ARE CONTINUING TO HEDGE THEIR BETS FOR MARCH 19.

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